

Appl. No. 10/661,664
Atty. Docket No. 8462C
Amdt. dated 01/04/2006
Reply to Office Action of 10/04/2005
Customer No. 27752

AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions, and listings, of claims in the application:

1. (Currently amended) Split fibers comprising diameters less than or equal to 30 microns and greater elongation to break values than fibers of the same size obtained by direct spinning, wherein the split fibers are obtained by stretching a A splittable composite fiber comprising a diameter greater than or equal to 40 microns and fiber comprising at least two thermoplastic resin components; wherein said composite fiber has a diameter \geq 40 microns, wherein said composite fiber is capable of being split into at least two fibers each having a diameter \leq 30 microns, and wherein said split fibers have greater elongation to break values than fibers of the same size that are obtained by direct spinning.
2. (Canceled)
3. (Currently amended) The ~~splittable composite~~ split fibers of Claim 1, wherein the at least two thermoplastic resin components are selected from the group consisting of: polyolefins; polyesters; polyamides; and copolymers comprising thermoplastic resins selected from the group consisting of polyolefins, polyesters and polyamides; and mixtures thereof.
4. (Currently amended) The ~~splittable composite~~ split fibers of Claim 3, wherein the at least two thermoplastic resin components comprise polyolefins, wherein said polyolefins comprise polypropylene as a first component and polyethylene as a second component.
5. (Currently amended) A nonwoven web comprising the ~~splittable composite~~ fibers of Claim 1.
6. (Currently amended) A nonwoven web comprising the ~~splittable composite~~ fibers of Claim 4.

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7. (Original) A laminate comprising the nonwoven web of Claim 5.
8. (Original) A disposable absorbent article comprising the nonwoven web of Claim 5.
9. (Original) A disposable absorbent article comprising the laminate of Claim 7.
10. (Currently amended) The ~~splittable-composite~~ split fibers of Claim 1, wherein the ~~[[said]]~~ splittable composite fiber ~~[[has]]~~ comprises a cross-section selected from the group consisting of: side by side; segmented pie; hollow segmented pie; segmented ribbon; tipped multilobal; and mixtures thereof.
11. (Currently amended) The ~~splittable-composite~~ split fibers of Claim 10 wherein the ~~said fiber~~ cross-section is selected from the group consisting of: segmented pie; hollow segmented pie; and mixtures thereof.
12. (Currently amended) The ~~splittable-composite~~ split fibers of Claim 11 wherein the ~~said fiber~~ cross-section is a hollow segmented pie.
13. (Currently amended) The ~~splittable-composite~~ split fibers of Claim 1 wherein the splittable composite fiber ~~[[has]]~~ comprises a shape selected from the group consisting of: round; elongated; multilobal; and mixtures thereof.
14. (Currently amended) The ~~splittable-composite~~ split fibers of Claim 13 wherein ~~said fiber~~ the shape is round.
15. (Currently amended) The ~~splittable-composite~~ split fibers of Claim 14 wherein ~~[[said]]~~ the splittable composite fiber has a cross-section that is a hollow segmented pie.
16. (Currently amended) The ~~splittable-composite~~ split fibers of Claim 15 wherein the at least two thermoplastic resin components comprise polypropylene as a first component and polyethylene as ~~asecond~~ a second component.
17. (Cancelled)

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18. (Cancelled)
19. (Cancelled)
20. (Currently amended) The nonwoven web of Claim 5 wherein ~~said~~ the nonwoven is bonded by a process selected from the group consisting of: thermal point bonding; through-air bonding; hydroentangling; ultrasonic bonding; and mixtures thereof.
21. (New) The split fibers of Claim 1, wherein the splittable composite fiber is stretched via ring-rolling.
22. (New) A method for making a soft, extensible nonwoven web, wherein the method comprises the steps of:
 - (a) providing splittable composite fibers comprising diameters greater than or equal to 40 microns and at least two thermoplastic resin components;
 - (b) forming the splittable composite fibers into a nonwoven web; and
 - (c) stretching the nonwoven web such that a portion of the splittable composite fibers separate into split fibers comprising diameters less than or equal to 30 microns and greater elongation to break values than fibers of the same size obtained by direct spinning.
23. (New) The method of claim 22, wherein the stretching of the splittable composite fibers is via ring-rolling.
24. (New) The method of claim 22, wherein the at least two thermoplastic resin components are selected from the group consisting of: polyolefins; polyesters; polyamides; and copolymers comprising thermoplastic resins selected from the group consisting of polyolefins, polyesters, polyamides; and mixtures thereof.